



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Charles D. Baker, Governor ♦ Karyn E. Polito, Lt. Governor ♦ Chrystal Kornegay, Undersecretary

PEER-TO-PEER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Program Description

The Peer-to-Peer Technical Assistance Program awards small grants to Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) non-entitlement communities to hire Peer Consultants for short-term problem solving or technical assistance projects that support local community development and capacity building activities.

Eligible Applicants

CDBG non-entitlement communities are eligible applicants – i.e., municipalities with a population of under 50,000 that do not receive CDBG funds directly from the federal Department of Housing and Community Development.

Peer Consultants may come from either CDBG non-entitlement or entitlement communities. The Peer Consultant may not come from the municipality requesting the grant. The Program is funded with Massachusetts CDBG technical assistance funds.

Funding Amounts

Municipalities may apply to DHCD for \$1,000 grants to pay for up to 30 hours (\$900) of Peer Consultant assistance and up to \$100 for reimbursement of their travel, photocopying and/or the cost of incidental materials. Elected officials, municipal employees and members of municipal boards are eligible to be Peer Consultants.

Application Process

All non-entitlement communities are encouraged to apply for funding. However, because funds are limited and a rolling application process is used, applications will be funded on a first-come, first-served basis.

- A municipality's Board of Selectmen or chief executive writes a letter describing a problem or issue that can be addressed or solved by the short-term technical assistance of an official or staff member from another community.
- A board, commission or department may also submit a request for assistance. Such a request must include a vote of the Board of Selectmen or letter of support from the Mayor or City Manager approving the request.
- A community may recommend a specific individual to serve as its Peer Consultant in its request letter or solicit DHCD's assistance in finding a suitable Peer.
- The request letter and, if appropriate, the required vote or letter of support, is submitted to:

Attn: Peer-to-Peer Technical Assistance Program
DHCD
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 300
Boston, MA 02114

DHCD's Review Process

- The request is reviewed to ensure that it meets the following requirements:
 1. It does not give an unfair advantage to one community over another in a competitive situation, i.e., preparing a grant application or recruiting a specific business; and
 2. It does not propose as a Peer either a municipal official who is an elected or appointed official or an employee of the community making the request...
- If the letter suggests a Peer, DHCD reviews its list to see if this Peer is on the current list. If the proposed Peer is not on the list, DHCD contacts this individual to ascertain whether she/he is willing to complete an application to serve as a Peer Consultant. If no Peer is suggested, DHCD identifies a suitable Peer from its list of Peer Consultants on file.
- DHCD discusses the project with both the requesting community and the Peer to ensure that they are willing to work together and that the project, as described, is achievable for the available funding.
- All eligible requests will be funded provided funding is available and there is sufficient time between the award date and the end of the fiscal year to complete the project.
- Once an award is made, a grant contract between DHCD and the municipality is prepared. It includes a scope of services based on the request letter that directs the municipality to hire the designated Peer to do the project as described.

Municipal Responsibilities

- Designate a local contract manager.
- Sign and return the grant award contract to DHCD.
- Execute a contract/agreement with the Peer Consultant, including a detailed scope of services and work schedule.
- Request a contract amendment if modifications are needed in the scope of services.
- Implement the project. **The Peer Consultant should not undertake any work until both contracts are executed** – i.e., the contract between DHCD and the municipality and between the municipality and the Peer Consultant.
- Upon project completion, the Peer Consultant prepares a final report for the municipality and submits an invoice that details the number of hours worked and incidental expenses incurred.
- **Submit (5 documents) with the Payment Request:**
 1. A letter to DHCD requesting the payment amount presented in the invoice;
 2. A copy of the invoice;
 3. A copy of the Peer Consultant's Final Report;
 4. A Payment Request Form (provided by DHCD to grantee); and
 5. A Peer-to-Peer Technical Assistance Program Evaluation Form (provided by DHCD to grantee).
- When all required reporting information is submitted and complete, DHCD will reimburse the municipality for its payment to the Peer Consultant.

Peer Technical Assistance Projects Include

- CDGB grant start-up and record keeping processes
- Designing guidelines for housing rehabilitation programs
- Preparing an affordable housing assessment
- Preparing a Housing Production Plan

- Establishing a redevelopment authority
- Designing a downtown revitalization strategy
- Establishing a micro-enterprise assistance program
- Preparing for a GIS needs assessment
- Developing policies for economic development, septic system betterment programs or revolving loan fund
- Undertaking an inventory of historical properties

Contact Information

If you have any questions about the Peer-to-Peer Program, would like to discuss a proposed application, or are a locally elected or appointed official or municipal staff with expertise you could share as a Peer Consultant, please contact the Division of Community Services at (617) 573-1400.